

## ALICE IN CHAINS

Jasper has recently taken up a new hobby: photography. He bought a fancy Nikon digital camera, best for portraits, he tells me, with both wide-angle and zoom lenses, a tripod, reflectors, and professional lighting equipment. I couldn't figure out his motives, exactly, since I can't see him starting a new career as a wedding photographer.

However, his intentions became clearer after a recent weekend when the rest of us went hunting and Jasper and Alice stayed home. There was nothing unusual about that, as all of us enjoy private time with our mates whenever we can get it. A few days after we returned, though, Emmett came to find me at the cottage, bouncing with excitement over his latest gossip.

"Dude!" he greeted me when I stepped outside. (Apparently, he is updating his slang.) "You will never believe what I found in Jasper's office!"

"What were you doing in Jasper's office?" I inquired, though I didn't need to ask. Emmett never hesitates to snoop in his brothers' lives, especially if he thinks he might discover something personal or salacious. It seems he never will outgrow the adolescent phase of drooling over girlie magazines and lacing every conversation with sexual innuendo. We all have our faults, I suppose, and his is at least amusing—when his target is someone other than yourself, that is.

"Ah, the usual..." he equivocated before directing my attention away from his misdemeanor. "I found pictures! Perverted pictures!"

I couldn't be moved to exclaim at his amazement and disbelief. After all, I had discovered the nature of Alice and Jasper's marital relationship some time before. And I'd done my best not to see

*images in my brother and sister's minds on that particular subject, though it amuses Alice to surprise me with a scandalous thought or picture from time to time.*

*It is rare that anyone in our family can keep a secret from me, but I had hoped that this particular one might stop there because it's so intensely personal. But no... not with Emmett around.*

*"Em, I really don't want to know," I said, trying to interrupt his train of thought, but he would not be deterred.*

*"You won't believe it, Bro. These pictures are hot! Super hot!"*

*I suddenly wanted—not for the first time—to stick my fingers in my ears like a child and holler "la, la, la, la..." to drown out Emmett's thoughts. Alas, it never works.*

*"Now I know what Jasper's been doing with that fancy camera of his. He and Alice are into some kinky stuff!"*

*"You don't have to tell me about it...please don't. I already know anyway."*

*"Dude! And you didn't tell me?"*

*"Why would I do that? It's their private business. You shouldn't be poking around in their rooms anyway, Emmett," I chastised, recognizing that I sounded like an old schoolmarm. "Jasper will go berserk when he finds out and, seriously, he might not get over this. If I were you, I'd keep it to myself."*

*"How can I? It's so juicy! I mean, look at these!"*

*Of course, I couldn't help but look since he was showing the images to me in his thoughts. Fortunately, they weren't as intimate as I had feared. Actually, the images were quite beautiful in a bent sort of way. Alice is my sister and though I really don't want to think of her like that, I can still appreciate Jasper's eye.*



*Alice in Chains, I thought. The image would make a striking album cover for the Seattle grunge band of that name, a moniker that had never made much sense to me. Now I get it...perhaps.*

*“That’s the least of the batch. Check this out!” Emmett’s eyebrows folded together like he was concentrating hard to make me see the image. He should know by now that that is entirely unnecessary.*

*“Please don’t, Emmett...,” I responded to no avail. The second image popped into his mind.*



*“I don’t care who you are, that is hot! I wonder where they took them.”*

*“In the attic,” I replied with resignation. “When we were on our hunting trip.”*

*“You didn’t tell me!”*

*“Like I said, Em, it’s private.”*

*“Not anymore!” Emmett laughed raucously.*

*I was glad that the photographs were all Emmett had unearthed. At least he hadn’t discovered Alice and Jasper’s forest hideaway and their stockpile of specialized equipment. These pictures weren’t explicitly sexual, after all—more artistic. One can take sexy photographs that aren’t necessarily documenting a sex life. Knowing Emmett, though, he would take them literally, assuming the most*

*lascivious interpretation possible. Still, he can't know the truth unless one of us tells him.*

*Ack!! Why am I making this my problem?*

*I suppose I feel protective of Alice, though why I should, I'm not sure, since she's never been concerned about my knowledge of her sex life.*

*Emmett broke into my thoughts. "Check this out!"*

*Could I help it?*



*A former Texas horseman, Jasper certainly knows his knots!*

*"I'm gonna try some of this kinky stuff with Rose!" Emmett exclaimed before adding, "if she'll let me."*

*I laughed. "Good luck with that."*

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*"So what did you think?" Alice wanted to know when I saw her later.*

*"About what?"*

*"You know...the photos..."*

*"So you saw that, did you?"*

*"Of course. I think Jasper left them on his desk on purpose. He's really proud of the skill he's developing."*

*"Ah, that explains why Emmett didn't find anything explicit."*

*"Exactly. But you still haven't said."*

*"What?"*

*"Edward! You know very well what! The photographs!"*

*"They're very nice, Alice." Fortunately, she let me off the hook with that bland acknowledgement.*

*"This one's my favorite of the non-X-rated ones." She showed me a photo that Emmett hadn't.*



*"Do you like it?" she asked impatiently.*

"Alice," I complained, "do you really want me to comment on Jasper's sado-masochistic creations?"

"Of course. You're the only one I can show them to without carrying the evidence around in my pocket. And anyway, it's not S & M. It's Bondage & Domination."

I didn't bother to inquire what the difference is. It's all too much information.

"Why don't you show them to Bella?" I suggested, hoping Alice would go away and leave me alone. "See what she says."

"What do you say?" she insisted.

"They're beautiful. Satisfied?"

"Yes," she replied smugly. "Jasper's thinking about publishing them or selling them on the internet."

"Do you really want your naked behind flying all over the world?"

"What do I care? Nobody will know it's me."

"True. Jasper doesn't need the money, does he?"

"No, of course not! He's just proud and wants people to see them."

"Okay, I've seen them and they're very nice. Now go bug somebody else, please."

"Oh...you're impossible! BELLA!"

Edward

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